

LONDON DAILY TELEGRAPH  
7 December 1981

## THE INTELLIGENCE WAR SOVIET EYE IN ADEN

By ROBERT MOSS

**BULGARIAN** engineers are at work on a vast military headquarters complex in the mountains outside Aden.

This construction programme, officially described as the "November 30th Plan," is intended to produce a new command centre for all of the Soviet bloc forces deployed in South Yemen which is one of the Russians' most loyal satellites in the Arab world and their main base of operations in the oil-rich Arabian peninsula.

The new command complex, located at Jebel Hal, will eventually replace the present joint headquarters set up at Khormaksar. An elaborate ground-to-air defence system is being put into place.

Close attention is also being paid to perimeter security, since Soviet military personnel in South Yemen have been subjected to increasing hostility from the local populations; there have been reports of three separate bomb attacks on the outskirts of the Khormaksar base in recent weeks.

At the same time, the Russians are installing a network of missile bases in South Yemen that extend from al-Man-soura in the suburbs of Aden to Bir Faehl and from Dar Saa'd to Saqiya on the border of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen).

The primary objective of this system appears to be to protect a new series of military camps for Soviet, Cuban and South Yemeni forces that is being established in coastal areas north and east of Aden from seaborne attack. Construction work is proceeding rapidly on a Soviet missile base at Amrat.

### Training school

Of more direct concern to South Yemen's Arab neighbours is a Western intelligence report that the Russians have opened an amphibious training school in a high-security zone in the Ma'alla district of Aden. Informed sources believe that this facility may be used to train guerrillas from Oman and other nearby States as well as commando units of the South Yemeni army.

The Russians are also expanding their network of air force and naval bases, which includes Perim, Socotra and other islands strategically located near the mouth of the Red Sea. It is reliably reported that many local inhabitants of Socotra have been forcibly deported to the mainland, and that work on the enlarged military installations is being carried out by political prisoners.

However, the progressive conversion of South Yemen into a kind of land-based aircraft carrier for the Soviet Union under the leadership of an openly Marxist-Leninist regime has not gone unresisted by its own people. There are signs of a growing mood of revolt amongst the traditionalist tribesmen of the Hadramaut.

The six most powerful tribes in the region banded together to resist the attempt by the Aden government to impose compulsory military conscription.

The regime has responded with a savage programme of economic sanctions. It has forbidden the six tribes to make use of motor vehicles, and has ordered the closure of food shops in their area and a ban on further deliveries of fuel for the water pumps on which the survival of cattle herds and crops in this parched region depends.

### Rebel tribes

Leaders of one of the rebellious tribes — the al-Yamani — responded to an invitation to hold talks with the Aden government; but its delegates were arrested on their arrival in the capital.

The pro-Western regime of Sultan Qaboos of Oman is an obvious target for the Soviet build-up in neighbouring South Yemen. The Sultan was bitterly criticised by other Arab leaders for his willingness to participate in joint military exercises with the United States and Egypt. Many military analysts anticipate renewed probes by South Yemeni-backed guerrillas into Oman.

But it is notable that in recent months there has also been a marked build-up of South Yemeni forces, accompanied by Soviet "advisers," along the border with North Yemen, particularly in the areas of al-Harr and al-Haliem. Soviet military experts have supervised the installation of missile launchers and radar equipment.

Long-range artillery has been moved into position opposite the North Yemeni military camp at al-Suwaida and the Dar Dhi Nam airfield. Some 20 Soviet-supplied T-62 and T-64 tanks have been deployed opposite the North Yemeni town of al-Baidha.

The commander of the South Yemeni forces in this region has been identified as Major Sulaiman Qais. He was formerly attached to the Soviet joint headquarters at Khormaksar.

### Gaddafi's friends

Nato intelligence sources estimate that there are more than 5,000 military personnel from Soviet bloc countries

stationed in Libya mostly from Russia, East Germany and Poland.

A new contingent of Soviet military advisers recently arrived in Tripoli to run courses at the so-called "Armed People's College," whose declared purpose is to "consolidate the fighting standards of all ranks of the Libyan people."

Col Gaddafi has announced grandiose plans for the creation of a 500,000-strong "People's Militia," an objective that seems beyond the reach of a country with a total population of under three million.

Soviet bloc military personnel not only run training programmes; they are the backbone of several units in Gaddafi's armed forces. Most of the pilots, air controllers and maintenance crews in the Libyan air force are from Soviet Bloc countries, with a sprinkling of mercenaries from farther afield. Most of the Libyan tank units are manned by Soviet Bloc troops.

Thanks to Moscow, Gaddafi now controls the tenth-largest armoured force in the world — some 2,600 tanks, mostly Soviet-made T-34s, T-55s, T-62s and T-72s, as well as some 2,000 armoured personnel carriers and armoured cars. A Czech-operated tank workshop has been set up east of Tobruk.

East Germany's Ministry of State Security supervises all the operations of the Libyan Mukhabarat, or security and intelligence service, which has been embroiled in many assassination plots abroad.

Officers and NCOs from the Soviet Bloc are also attached to Gaddafi's "Islamic Legion." This is a mercenary force of some 7,000 irregulars, recruited from all over the Arab world and Africa, that was used in the invasion of Chad.

The Russians are continuing to exploit Gaddafi as a surrogate. One of the most striking examples in recent weeks is Libya's role in seeking to whip up an insurrection against Somalia's President Siad Barre. The Libyans have been supplying Soviet-made arms to the Somali Salvation Front, a Marxist opposition group. In the first half of this year, the arms were delivered by Hercules C-130 transport planes to the guerrillas at Diredawa, a village in the Ogaden on the Ethiopian side of the border.

The airlift was suspended last summer, after the Sudanese government protested Libyan violations of its airspace. But recent reports suggest that it has been quietly resumed.